# Washington

## Improving Diabetes Care in Community Health Centers Through a Statewide Collaborative

### Public Health Problem

Of the 217,000 Washington residents who are diagnosed with diabetes, 20% to 48% of them have extremely high blood sugar measurements. In 1999, diabetes was associated with 56,485 hospitalizations in Washington at a cost of $671 million. Many of these hospitalizations could have been prevented through early detection and appropriate diabetes management, including blood sugar control.

### Evidence That Prevention Works

Prevention of elevated blood sugar can dramatically prevent other health problems for people with diabetes and potentially reduce health care costs. A systematic and collaborative approach to shift the medical care delivery system to a chronic care focus can improve blood sugar levels and other diabetes indicators in patients who participate in primary care organizations.

### Program Example

The Washington State Department of Health Diabetes Prevention and Control Program and Qualis Health (a Medicare Quality Improvement Organization) sponsored the Washington State Diabetes Collaboratives (WSDC) I and II.WSDC I and II are quality improvement projects for primary care practices to improve health outcomes for people with diabetes. Seventeen practice teams and 10 health plans participated in WSDC I, and 30 practice teams and 7 health plans participated in WSDC II. Teams established a registry to track their patients with diabetes and test and implement changes in their practice using the Chronic Care Model as a framework. The Washington State Diabetes Prevention and Control Program developed the Diabetes Electronic Management System (DEMS) and provided this tracking system and technical assistance to participating clinics free of charge. After a 13-month intensive phase, the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program and Qualis Health continue to provide services and encouragement to support the clinical practice teams continuing their work. Some of these services include maintaining an active E-mail list for team members to consult their peers, providing aggregate quarterly reporting to give teams a statewide benchmark, providing ongoing DEMS registry support, and training new staff. Among 981 patients, blood sugar levels decreased on average by approximately 10%, and the prevalence of patients who had extremely high blood sugar levels decreased from 24% to 17%.

### Implications

The Washington State Diabetes Collaboratives are producing results and demonstrate that this state Diabetes Prevention and Control Program can play a critical role in improving diabetes care.



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